

# Too Hot to Handle

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“**D**ude, you won’t believe what happened in port!” is a phrase that usually prefaces an over-exaggerated story of something minor that happened. In this case, though, the story is difficult to overindulge.

We were on cruise aboard USS *Enterprise* (CVN-65) and just had pulled into our first port: Split, Croatia. The first strike group to pull into Croatia in six years, we had the pleasure of returning a Medal of Honor to the last known living relatives of a Sailor who died in Pearl Harbor.



Navy photo by PHAN Rob Gaston

Of course, no port call is complete without some quality time experiencing the local festivities and the ever-important admin. As we do in most ports, we set up our admin away from the bustle of the main town. Our choice was Trogir, a neighboring and pleasantly quaint tourist location. The atmosphere was relaxing, the weather nice, and the food great. It was easy to get comfortable in this environment and operate as one normally would in the States.

We decided to enjoy the area nightlife on what would be the last night of our visit. As the final squadronmate was getting ready to take his shower, we failed to tell him that we all had noticed the water temperature was extremely sensitive. Complicating matters was the fact you had to flip a wall switch to start the water heater if you wanted hot water. We had left the wall switch turned on.

About 10 minutes later, the squadronmate came out of the room, holding his shirt away from his chest. He had what looked like severe sunburn. Thinking he probably just had forgotten to apply sunscreen during the day's previous activities, we dismissed his injury at first. Then, he explained he actually had burned his chest in the shower.

He apparently had bumped the shower temperature handle all the way to hot, which caused the water to become scalding. He jumped to the side of the shower to avoid any more exposure, but the boiling water already had done its damage. He had second-degree burns over about a square-foot area [see accompanying photo], and blisters eventually bubbled up. We located some medicine in the local populace to aid in his discomfort, and, upon reporting to ship's medical, he was treated and ordered down from flight ops for medical reasons.

We later learned the water had to have been almost to the boiling point to have caused such



burns. It would have been like taking a pot of boiling water from the stove and dumping it on your chest—not exactly the way to have a “good time” on your last night in port.

Any time you're in a foreign land, be alert to the fact that many things are different. In this case, the building codes (for water temperature)

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weren't the same as they are in the States. We often take routine and daily activities like showering for granted, especially when we expect normalcy, but an accidental nudge put an aviator out of commission for three days. We learned firsthand that slowing down, taking your time, and assessing your environment will pay off, no matter where you are. ■

For more info, go to: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/first-aid-burns/FA00022>.